

Message

From: Ann Looney [alooney@moses-ma.org]
Sent: 8/19/2011 6:12:22 PM
To: Hanchett, James (DPH) [/O=COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS/OU=MassMail-01/cn=Recipients/cn=James.Hanchett]; Salem, Sharon (DPH) [/O=COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS/OU=MassMail-01/cn=Recipients/cn=Sharon.Salem]; Pontes, Rebecca (DPH) [/O=COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS/OU=MassMail-01/cn=Recipients/cn=Rebecca.Pontes]; Farak, Sonja (DPH) [/O=COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS/OU=MassMail-01/cn=Recipients/cn=Sonja.Farak]
Subject: FW: WAMC Public Radio interview (text with audio)

fyi

From: Colleen Turner [mailto:colleen@btc-boston.com]
Sent: Friday, August 19, 2011 2:00 PM
To: Joe Dorant
Cc: [REDACTED]; Ann Looney; mgates@moses-ma.org; Bridget K. Quinn; Mickey Splaine, DOT; Colleen Turner
Subject: Re: WAMC Public Radio interview (text with audio)

Nicely done, Joe.

<http://www.publicbroadcasting.net/wamc/news.newsmain/article/0/2706/1842542/WAMC.News/Western.Massachusetts.law.enforcement.officials.warn.of.delayed.prosecutions.resulting.from.pending.closure.of.UMass.Amherst.drug.testing.lab>

Western Massachusetts law enforcement officials warn of delayed prosecutions resulting from pending closure of UMass Amherst drug testing lab
Patrick Donges (2011-08-19)

PITTSFIELD, MA (WAMC) - Thursday, the Springfield Republican reported that the state run drug testing laboratory at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst will close at the end of September due to state budget constraints. The lab weighs and analyzes samples confiscated by police departments throughout the Western half of the state.

Massachusetts Department of Public Health spokeswoman Jennifer Manley said in a statement the department will save about \$230,000 this year by closing the lab.

She said the closure was a result of, "an unprecedented fiscal situation;" four state employees will be laid off or transferred.

The next nearest state drug testing lab is in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood of Boston, about 90 miles from Amherst and 130 miles from Pittsfield.

Law enforcement officials say closure of the Amherst lab could affect the speed at which drug cases are prosecuted; Stephen O'Brien is Chief of the Lenox Police Department.

"It won't affect our enforcement efforts whatsoever, but it will affect the analysis of drugs to get a certificate saying that what we have actually seized is indeed drugs."

"It will certainly slow down the prosecution's efforts to wrap the case up in a timely manner."

Michael Wynn, Chief of the Pittsfield Police Department, agreed the closure will slow down the process required to prosecute drug offenders.

"It's going to be a major impact on both the speed of prosecution and our ability to have our evidence processed."

The closure will also affect the budgets of local police departments, as O'Brien explains.

"Coming from an administrative perspective; for this department to have to send someone to Jamaica Plain is much more costly."

When asked if the closure would affect the bottom line of local police with regards to overtime, O'Brien said, "of course it is."

Wynn agreed, noting that the travel to and from Boston will mean one less officer would be available for duty in Pittsfield.

"Amherst is within an hour away, so if I have to have an officer drive to Amherst and back, that's a quarter of their day."

"If I have to have them drive to Jamaica Plain and back, that's pretty much a full work day; so every lab trip is going to take a full duty day."

The closure also comes as police continue their fight against substance abuse; over the past two decades Western Massachusetts has struggled with the transport of drugs through the state to and from Boston, New York State and Vermont, the new threat of prescription drug abuse, and a recent resurgence in the use of heroin.

Joe Dorant, president of the Massachusetts Organization of State Engineers and Scientists, the union that represents lab employees, said the Jamaica Plain lab already has a three month backlog, and the addition of over 6,000 cases handled annually by Amherst will only stretch that delay.

"Police officers, district attorneys, and the courts rely on these chemists to do the analysis and also to testify in court so they can prosecute the drug dealers in the western part of the state."

"There will definitely be a lag time in getting these cases to trial, and I'm afraid it will allow drug dealers to be on the streets a lot longer."

Wynn called the decision to close the lab "poorly informed," citing new statewide evidentiary requirements put in place over the past two years that require investigators to work more closely with chemists on each drug case.

"By taking away our local access, it's definitely going to impact the outcome of some cases."

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From: "Joe Dorant" <jdorant@moses-ma.org>

Organization: M.O.S.E.S.

Date: Fri, 19 Aug 2011 13:15:03 -0400

To: "Colleen Turner" <colleen@btc-boston.com>

Cc: [REDACTED], "Ann Looney" <alooney@moses-ma.org>, <mgates@moses-ma.org>, "'Bridget K. Quinn'"
[REDACTED] "Splaine, Michael \ (MHD\)" <Michael.Splaine@state.ma.us>

Subject: RE: Radio interview

State News Service

From: Joe Dorant [mailto:jdorant@moses-ma.org]

Sent: Friday, August 19, 2011 1:04 PM

To: Colleen Turner

Subject: Radio interview

Colleen

I think this is where the interview was from. Northeast Public Radio Albany NY ??? The person who interviewed me was Patrick Donges. I have a call into him to get info on how I can listen to it and when it will be run. I also heard I made the Herald.

<http://www.wamc.org/>

Thanks !

Joe